

EPA Region III

Office of Public Affairs

EARLY BIRD HEADLINES

Tuesday, February 21 , 2012

*** MORNING HOT LIST ***

EPA gives mixed grades on Chesapeake Bay cleanup plans

BALTIMORE SUN (Saturday) Federal regulators have given mostly high marks to the latest Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan drafted by Maryland but found fault with Pennsylvania's and Virginia's restoration blueprints. In reports posted online late Friday, the Environmental Protection Agency said Maryland's draft "watershed implementation plan" for meeting the agency's bay pollution reduction goals "meets EPA's expectations." Maryland and the other five states that drain into the Chesapeake have been working with the agency for the past three years on a "pollution diet" aimed at reducing nutrient and sediment pollution fouling the bay by 20 percent to 25 percent. The states are required to have all control measures needed to restore the bay in place by 2025. The EPA mostly praised draft plans submitted in December by Maryland, Delaware, the District of Columbia and West Virginia, but warned of "enhanced oversight" of pollution permitting and stepped-up federal enforcement in Pennsylvania and Virginia if they do not address shortcomings in their strategies for bay cleanup. The agency noted that Maryland's pollution-control efforts depend in part on closing the funding gap for upgrading the state's 67 largest sewage treatment plants over the next five years. Gov. Martin O'Malley is pushing for legislation in Annapolis that would effectively double the "flush fee" paid by every household and business to cover the projected \$385 million shortfall....Jeff Corbin, senior bay adviser to EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, said in an email that federal officials are prepared to take such actions but would rather not. The plans the states submitted two months ago were drafts, he noted, and the states have until the end of March to firm them up. Virginia's cleanup plan "seems pretty strong," Corbin said in an email, but the state did not submit all the data needed to assess it fully. "We will be working with [Pennsylvania officials] between now and March 30 to strengthen their plan," Corbin added. "There have been some good discussions with them recently."

First-ever shale health office opens

PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE Nonprofit program to assess effects of rampant gas development. A new, first-of-its-kind medical program to assess both the individual and public health impacts of widespread Marcellus Shale gas development has begun in Washington County. The nonprofit Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project opened an office in McMurray last week in response to what it termed growing local and medical concerns over the potential health effects from hazardous chemical and pollutant releases associated with the rapid growth of shale gas development. The nonprofit health project, funded by the Heinz Endowments, the Pittsburgh Foundation and the Claneil Foundation, opened its office last week on Washington Road in McMurray. The office will help area residents recognize and understand exposure pathways in the air and water, and schedule medical exams and evaluations to diagnose health problems that may result from them, said Raina Rippel, project director. An on-site Washington County nurse practitioner is available by appointment for home visits, exams and consultations, and already has conducted several patient assessments. "I've been out

there in the communities, listening to residents. We know there are public health impacts, but there is uncertainty," Ms. Rippel said. "Our goal is to help individuals -- help them navigate the health care systems, help them get the answers to the health care questions they have and put them in contact with the resources they need, whether that's water testing or filtration or medical services." Washington County has about 700 Marcellus Shale gas wells -- more than any other county in southwestern Pennsylvania -- and at least a dozen compressor stations, which pump natural gas through pipelines. Health impacts can occur from spills that contaminate streams or water sources, or air pollution from drill rigs, holding tanks, compressor stations and diesel truck traffic, Ms. Rippel said.

DCNR linked to gas revenue

ASSOCIATED PRESS PITTSBURGH — Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale gas drilling companies are recycling more and more of their briny, chemical-laden wastewater, in most cases complying with a request from state officials to keep the pollutants from being discharged into rivers that supply drinking water. But experts are wondering if a loophole in disposal regulations is still allowing significant quantities of one of the worrisome compounds— salty bromides— into rivers and streams, or if shale gas drillers were only part of the problem. The new mystery is this: why hasn't the dramatic progress on the wastewater recycling led to equally clear declines in river bromide levels? An analysis by The Associated Press of 2011 state data released Friday found that of the 10.1 million barrels of shale wastewater generated in the last half of 2011, about 97 percent was either recycled, sent to deep-injection wells, or sent to a treatment plant that doesn't discharge into waterways. Some of the new disposal trends are also raising other questions. The amount of Marcellus drilling waste injected deep underground nearly tripled in the last six months of 2011, with much of that going to Ohio. Officials there are examining whether the high-pressure injections contributed to a series of small earthquakes near one waste site. In the same period of 2010, shale drillers sent about 2.8 million barrels of waste —or 118 million gallons— to numerous treatment plants that discharge into rivers and streams.

Fracking's effects on groundwater may be overblown, study shows

FOX NEWS (Monday) A University of Texas study has found no evidence that fracking -- hydraulic fracturing of shale to extract natural gas -- is contaminating groundwater. Problems associated with the process have been reported in water, but they appear to occur at ground level or just below the surface, according to the study released Friday. Many are common to any natural-gas extraction process, or are the result of mishandling of wastewater, the researchers said. "The bottom line was, in the areas we investigated ... we found no direct evidence that hydraulic fracturing itself was contaminating groundwater," said Charles Groat, professor of geology at the University of Texas at Austin. Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, involves injecting water, sand and chemicals at high pressure into shale, which shatters the rock, releasing natural gas. Wells are dug straight down into the ground and then branched off horizontally into the shale, making the gas far more accessible. Natural gas is the cleanest-burning hydrocarbon fuel, and North America has vast reserves that could replace petroleum products from overseas. The development of techniques that allow horizontal drilling has made it economical to extract the gas from shale seams. It is not clear how the study will play in areas in which the fracturing process is considered a public-health problem because of contaminated water. There even have been documented cases in Ohio and Pennsylvania homes of dissolved methane in the water either catching fire or exploding. Fracking is specifically exempt from the Clean Water Act.

Federal Workers Face 'Unprecedented Assault' in U.S. Budget War

BLOOMBERG BUSINESS NEWS Washington • Congress is considering ways to cut U.S. federal workers' pay, benefits and possibly their jobs even as a record number are borrowing against pensions. Concern over the situation almost derailed a deal to extend the payroll tax cut last week as several lawmakers objected to a provision that would have required federal workers to contribute more to their pensions. Negotiators ultimately agreed to target newly hired federal workers. There's more ahead, as moves to hold down government salaries mirror tightening at the state and local levels. Congress is considering extending a two-year federal pay freeze for

another year, through 2013. Bills designed to reduce the federal workforce continue to be introduced. And another measure is pending that includes across-the-board requirements for more contributions to pensions. "We are witnessing an unprecedented assault on public employees and federal employees in particular," said Rep. Gerald Connolly, D - Virginia, whose suburban district has one of the nation's largest concentrations of government workers. "I am mortally offended on their behalf that they continue to be singled out for every sacrifice." Lawmakers in Maryland, home to more than 300,000 federal workers, have also joined the fight. Sen. Ben Cardin, D - Maryland, and Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D - Maryland, whose district includes the Washington suburb of Bethesda, helped kill the initial pension provision in the payroll tax deal. "We still strongly oppose the provision that raises \$15 billion to help offset the cost of this package from future workers," the two lawmakers said in a statement last week. President Obama called both Van Hollen and Cardin last Wednesday to press them to agree to a deal. Cardin said Obama assured him that federal employees' salaries and benefits wouldn't become a routine target. "The president was pretty strong on his commitment to helping us make sure that doesn't happen," Cardin told reporters.

Congress targets federal workers for savings

ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON - (AP) -- Federal workers were \$15 billion losers as Congress looked for ways to pay for parts of the just-passed legislation to extend the payroll tax cut and federal unemployment benefits through the end of the year. Their advocates are crying foul, saying two consecutive years of seeing their pay frozen means the nation's 2 million civil servants already have contributed more than \$60 billion to reducing government costs. Republicans, led by their aggressive freshman class, say federal employees, with their generally secure jobs and benefits, can do more. They have proposed several bills to make that happen. The White House also is asking federal employees to pitch in more for their retirement plans. Under the bill passed Friday, about half of the \$30 billion cost of extending unemployment benefits will be made up by requiring newly hired federal workers to pay an additional 2.3 percent of their salaries for their pensions. Currently they pay 0.8 percent. Combined with other bills House Republicans have proposed to further limit federal wages and benefits, the total cost to civil servants could be \$134 billion over the next decade, said House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer of Maryland. "The ongoing efforts to target federal workers will substantially undermine our ability to recruit and retain the quality of people we need," said Hoyer, whose district encompassing some of the Washington suburbs is home to thousands of government employees. Unions representing federal workers were equally upset. "It is unreasonable to turn to this dedicated workforce yet again while shielding those who are not paying their share," said Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union. "I don't know how cutting our retirement puts anybody back to work," said John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees. "What are we, an ATM machine?"

Commentary: City a leader on clean water

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER Nearly every time it rains, water pollution problems follow. That's because the impenetrable surfaces of our cityscapes - buildings, sidewalks, roads - repel rainwater directly into storm drains and, ultimately, our waterways. Along the way, the water collects a toxic soup of oil, chemicals, animal waste, and trash. In many parts of the country, this polluted torrent overloads sewage treatment facilities, causing them to overflow and make matters worse. An estimated 10 trillion gallons of dirty runoff ends up in our rivers, lakes, and oceans annually, making storm water one of the nation's greatest sources of water pollution. Fortunately, cities such as Philadelphia have quietly begun to solve this problem in a way that could transform urban landscapes from coast to coast. In fact, the City of Brotherly Love is at the forefront of a national trend toward embracing urban design strategies, called "green infrastructure," that can slash water pollution, provide flood protection, beautify communities, and cut infrastructure and energy costs.

WVU Develops Marcellus Shale Air Monitoring System

WBOY-TV MORGANTOWN, W. Va. West Virginia University's Department of Community

Medicine is working with the Department of Energy on a new way to monitor health effects from air quality near Marcellus Shale drilling sites. "We're just beginning, really, to find out what comes from a gas drilling site like this," said Dr. Michael McCawley, a professor in the Department of Community Medicine. "We don't really know what the levels are or if, in fact, the levels are high enough to cause any concern anywhere around." The new monitors measure the levels of dust, other particulates, and gases like methane which have been linked to cancer and respiratory problems. "Later on, looking down the line at health effects, we don't want to be behind the curve in knowing what's happening," McCawley said. The monitors are portable and designed to be set up in a ring around drilling site to see what just what is coming from the site and what isn't. "Truck traffic from an interstate for example could put up the same volatile organic compounds that you might see from a well site. So you want to be able to distinguish what's coming onto the site versus what's leaving it. McCawley's team and the DOE will test the system at a drilling site in Washington, Pa. He hopes to see the system in action in West Virginia this year and plans to publish the blueprints so regulators, gas companies, or even community members could build one. The air quality data will all be public, to eliminate at least one area of contention between drillers and residents. "The community can watch and see what's happening as well when these instruments are used," McCawley said, "because they will transmit data online to a web site from a base station so both the community and the drillers can communicate better about what's actually happening."

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

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Why are these swallows overwintering at a Northeast Philly sewage plant Swallows usually go south in winter. But in recent years, a particular group seems to have picked one place in all of North America, aside from a slim edge of the balmy Gulf Coast, to spend the coldest months. It's not a pristine forest. Or a pretty field. Hard by Delaware Avenue, in a heavily industrial area where 18-wheelers rumble by and power lines crisscross the sky overhead, is the spot they've picked: the sewage-treatment plant in Northeast Philadelphia. Sewage-treatment plants tend to attract birds - at least part of the time - but apparently this one is way off the charts. Why they are there is a mystery that has remained unsolved for eight years. In 2005, Peter Kurtz was taking part in one of the regular winter bird counts, and it was not going well.

GreenSpace: Labeling the modified foods Industry, consumers dispute requiring information on genetic altering. Ninety percent of the corn, canola, soybeans, and sugar beets grown in the United States today have been fiddled with. Genes have been inserted that will help the crops grow better, resist the onslaughts of insects, or not be harmed by slatherings of herbicide intended to kill weeds. These genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, are the way farming can provide for the future of the planet, the industry tells us. Since GMOs are now in much of the food we eat, some people want to see that information on a label. In October, the nonprofit Center for Food Safety filed a petition with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration seeking to require such disclosure.

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

DEP investigates spill at gas well site in Washington Co.(Sunday) The state Department of Environmental Protection is continuing its investigation of the second spill in three months of condensate - "wet gases" and contaminated drilling liquids - at a Chevron-Appalachia Marcellus Shale gas well operation in Robinson Township, Washington County. John Poister, a DEP spokesman, said today the spilled condensate was discovered last Thursday by a township employee inspecting a gas pipeline facility nearby. The spill had run into Bigger Run Creek, a tributary of Raccoon Creek. He had no information about whether fish or aquatic life were killed, but cleanup crews placed absorbent material in the creek on Friday. Mr. Poister said he did not know how much condensate material was spilled. He said DEP is trying to determine the amount and the cause. Department investigators were at the scene Friday and plan to return this week. Mr. Poister said Chevron-Appalachia is continuing remediation work that started in December when the first condensate spill occurred. The company has dug up and filled more than 10 Dumpsters with contaminated soil. The DEP has not issued a violation notice for either spill.

First-ever shale health office opens Nonprofit program to assess effects of rampant gas development. A new, first-of-its-kind medical program to assess both the individual and public health impacts of widespread Marcellus Shale gas development has begun in Washington County. The nonprofit Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project opened an office in McMurray last week in response to what it termed growing local and medical concerns over the potential health effects from hazardous chemical and pollutant releases associated with the rapid growth of shale gas development. The nonprofit health project, funded by the Heinz Endowments, the Pittsburgh Foundation and the Claneil Foundation, opened its office last week on Washington Road in McMurray. The office will help area residents recognize and understand exposure pathways in the air and water, and schedule medical exams and evaluations to diagnose health problems that may result from them, said Raina Rippel, project director. An on-site Washington County nurse practitioner is available by appointment for home visits, exams and consultations, and already has conducted several patient assessments. "I've been out there in the communities, listening to residents. We know there are public health impacts, but there is uncertainty," Ms. Rippel said. "Our goal is to help individuals -- help them navigate the health care systems, help them get the answers to the health care questions they have and put them in contact with the resources they need, whether that's water testing or filtration or medical services." Washington County has about 700 Marcellus Shale gas wells -- more than any other county in southwestern Pennsylvania -- and at least a dozen compressor stations, which pump natural gas through pipelines. Health impacts can occur from spills that contaminate streams or water sources, or air pollution from drill rigs, holding tanks, compressor stations and diesel truck traffic, Ms. Rippel said.

Politics, resignations add wrinkle to area's DEP office (Monday) It's been a rough six months for attorneys at the state Department of Environmental Protection's regional office in Pittsburgh. The Corbett administration forced one longtime legal leader to resign, and its appointment of a replacement was thwarted by federal conflict-of-interest rules. Together, those departures have undermined the morale of the remaining attorneys in the southwest region, according to several people with knowledge of the issues, and pushed waves of concern through DEP offices across the state about the departure of a much-respected colleague and the subsequent politicization of the regional counsel job. The turmoil has occurred in one of the state's most legally complicated environmental regions and could, in time, affect work on administrative orders and enforcement cases involving coal mining, air and water pollution, and oil and gas drilling and development, observers say. DEP's southwest region has been without a permanent regional counsel since early November, when William Darr, the Corbett administration's appointee to the legal and administrative leadership position, resigned because of a financial link to Consol Energy. That followed the administration's forced resignation in July of longtime regional counsel Diana Stares. State General Counsel Stephen Aichele appointed Mr. Darr regional counsel effective Sept. 27 at an annual salary of \$105,018, according to state employment documents the Post-Gazette obtained through a Right-To-Know Law request.

Environmental group to sue over truck idling (Sunday) A statewide environmental organization has notified the Allegheny County Health Department and Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC that it intends to sue them for failing to comply with sign-posting provisions of the state diesel anti-idling law. Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future

last year asked those institutions to comply with the law and post signs limiting idling and the emissions of exhaust at loading docks where heavy-duty diesel trucks load and unload. The 60-day notice-of-intent-to-sue letters are required before a lawsuit can be filed. "It's almost beyond belief that these two health-care giants continue to flout the law, risking major health problems for their employees, visitors, patients and neighbors," PennFuture Vice President Heather Sage said Thursday. She noted that diesel emissions contain arsenic, benzene, formaldehyde and nickel and can cause asthma attacks, weakened cardiac and respiratory systems, and increased risk of cancer.

NRC asks reactor owners to reassess accident data (Saturday) The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has asked the owners of 11 Westinghouse nuclear reactors in the U.S., including two owned by FirstEnergy in Shippingport, to analyze whether the nuclear power plants could overheat in the event of a catastrophic accident. The NRC said Friday it is concerned that aging nuclear fuel used in Westinghouse reactors in Beaver County and elsewhere could have reduced ability to transfer heat and therefore exceed the 2,200-degree Fahrenheit limit in loss-of-coolant accidents. According to the commission, the fuel's "thermal conductivity degradation" wasn't properly analyzed in performance models done by Westinghouse. The reactor owners have until March 19 to provide the new analysis to the NRC. "The NRC alerted the industry to this problem in 2009, and Westinghouse needs to do more to account for thermal conductivity degradation in its fuel performance codes," said Eric Leeds, director of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. "It's not a safety issue or a concern for the public," said Scott Shaw, a Westinghouse spokesman. "It has to do with how old the fuel being used is. It depends on the fuel cycle of the individual plant. Each devises its core differently."

Production rises from Marcellus gas wells (Friday) HARRISBURG -- Production from the commonwealth's Marcellus Shale gas wells increased again during the final six months of 2011, boosting their output by more than 40 percent over the previous reporting period. The new data, released by the Department of Environmental Protection today, shows more than 2,200 producing wells, an increase of more than 500 since the first half of 2011. Drilling companies reported producing 67 billion cubic feet of natural gas in Washington County during the six months, up from 45.9 billion cubic feet during the previous half year. Greene County wells produced 67.8 billion cubic feet during the reporting period, up from 51.1 billion cubic feet. Washington County gained 75 producing wells, reaching 353 total. Greene County gained 49 producing wells for a total of 283. Allegheny County added one producing well, leaving it with four. In the northeast, Bradford County ended the year with 370 producing wells, the most of any county. Tioga County had 254 producing wells and Susquehanna County had 213 producing wells.

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

DEP investigating gas spill near Washington County well Department of Environmental Protection crews are working to learn more about the cause and source of a gas spill at a well in Robinson, Washington County. A township employee discovered the spill along Bigger Road on Thursday, prompting DEP to investigate. It is unknown whether the leak of condensate, known as "wet natural gas in the soil," made its way into nearby Bigger Run Creek, said John Poister, DEP spokesman. But a spokesman for Chevron-Appalachia, which owns the well, said that the gas in question is from a Dec. 19 spill and that it did not reach the creek. Trip Oliver, of Chevron-Appalachia, said the leak came from a crack in a 2-inch underground line. He said that the company worked with the DEP to remediate the spill and that work is ongoing. "Contrary to reports, there have been no additional spills on this well site since the initial leak was reported to DEP in December," Oliver said in a statement. "At this time there is no evidence to indicate that any condensate reached Bigger Run Creek." Crews are removing soil from the area, Poister said. "We don't know if this is another leak or a continuation of the other leak," he said. Poister could not say when more information might be available. At this point, the DEP has not issued the company a violation notice. "It's way too early in the investigation to do that," he said.

Water discharge near Butler County gas well site probed Police and a Butler County hazardous materials team visited a gas industry site in Lancaster on Monday after gray, muddy water that pooled among sandbags and hay bales along Crab Run Road prompted at least one call to 911. Gas drillers are putting pipeline under the road, and have a state permit and a system to control water, said Michael Brinkmeyer, general manager at Keystone Midstream Services LLC, which owns the pipeline system that conveys gas from many Butler County wells. There

were no accidents or uncontrolled or unexpected discharges, he said in a phone interview. The operation has lasted three to four weeks, with vacuum trucks gathering water from a ditch on the east side of the road, according to state and local officials. Because of the Presidents Day holiday, the Department of Environmental Protection could not immediately confirm what initiated the work, what is in the water or what's allowed under Keystone's permit, spokeswoman Katy Gresh said. Butler has become one of the most popular drilling counties in the region. Rex Energy Corp. is one of the biggest landholders there and Keystone, a joint venture it partly owns, has proposed six gas processing plants within a four-mile radius. That has led to protests from residents, many of whom have claimed Rex drilling harmed their drinking water. The state hasn't found evidence of that, Gresh said. Residents in the area of Crab Run Road interviewed yesterday said they weren't worried about the pipeline work and that they saw no ill effects. But environment watchers expressed concern. "Trying to clean things with hay bales doesn't seem like a very effective practice to me," said Diane Sipe, a member of the anti-drilling group Marcellus Outreach Butler, who called DEP about the drainage. "It's pretty clear that Crab Run is in danger." Crab Run, a tributary of Little Connoquenessing Creek, is important to farmers and a scenic draw for others, neighbors said. It sits downhill from a Rex well site about 1,400 feet away, according to state records.

Fawn residents want active role in gas well drilling A grassroots group has organized a community meeting where residents from Fawn Township and surrounding municipalities can learn more about Marcellus shale natural gas well drilling and a new state law that regulates the industry. "We want people to take an active role in this," said Carrie White, 48, of Fawn, who helped organize the group, Fawn Against Marcellus. She encourages residents from neighboring municipalities to attend Thursday's informational meeting. A spokesman for state Rep. Frank Dermody, D-Oakmont, confirmed that the legislator plans to attend to answer questions about the Marcellus legislation, known as House Bill 1950. The law supersedes municipal ordinances regulating where and when Marcellus wells can be drilled. Many towns banned or strictly regulated drilling in residential areas. The state law allows drilling anywhere as long as the drilling pad is at least 300 feet from a house and a well head is 500 feet from a house. The wells also must be located at least 1,000 feet from a water supply area, including a water well. Dermody voted against the bill. He says it doesn't do enough to protect the environment from the chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process to extract natural gas from Marcellus wells. Fawn Supervisors last week passed an ordinance requiring drillers to get a conditional use permit to drill in residential areas in an effort to control drilling during the time they have left to do so — less-than two months until the state law goes into effect.

Range Resources could be takeover target Range Resources Corp.'s drilling operations in Pennsylvania's Marcellus shale natural-gas field are so coveted that the most expensive exploration and production company in America is a takeover target, according to analysts. While Range is trading at 56 times estimated 2012 earnings, the highest of any exploration and production company valued at more than \$5 billion, the company owns the second-most leases in the Marcellus shale, according to Bloomberg data. With that region estimated to hold enough gas to supply the United States for six years, analysts project the Fort Worth, Texas-based company's profits will triple over the next three years. Range is scheduled to issue financial results later today. As energy companies look to tap unconventional assets after the average cost for finding and developing oil for the largest U.S. producers surged sixfold in the past decade, Raymond James Financial Inc. said Range may be a logical target for BP Plc or Exxon Mobil Corp. The \$10.2 billion company may fetch at least \$78 a share in a takeover, according to Morningstar Inc. The stock closed Friday at \$65.72 a share. "The rationale for any M&A candidate is do you have access to top quality resource plays and do you have size in those plays?" said Andrew Coleman, an analyst at Raymond James. "Range definitely checks both of those boxes. It's a relatively expensive stock with a well-defined track record of growth and a very large acreage position in the Marcellus."

Woman urges East Huntingdon to protect residents from drilling (Saturday) An East Huntingdon woman urged township supervisors this week to stand up for the rights of residents when confronted with Marcellus shale issues and to adopt an ordinance to ensure the community is protected. Veronica Coptis said she's been working with communities on Marcellus shale issues for more than two years and wants the board to adopt an ordinance addressing such issues as truck traffic, noise and light. She said those concerns are not regulated by the state but "can directly impact the quality of life of those living near Marcellus activity." "I am working with other townships

to create an ordinance, and I'm willing to offer assistance in getting some protections for the residents of the township," Coptis said during the board meeting Thursday. Regarding the natural-gas drilling bill that Gov. Tom Corbett signed into law on Monday, Coptis said the statute takes away local municipalities' "right to local control." The law, which imposes an "impact fee" to help fund various state and local government programs, strengthens safety standards and limits the ability of local officials to ban drilling in their communities.

Charleroi situation 'highly explosive' CHARLEROI — A potentially explosive situation was averted when a real estate agent reported a strong odor of gas in a vacant house on Monday afternoon. Emergency crews were called to 922 Lincoln Ave. in Charleroi after an agent checking on the property smelled gas upon gaining entry to the house. According to Charleroi fire Captain Mike McBride, the agent immediately closed the door and called Columbia Gas Co. "When the gas company got there and did a reading, it came back as 90 percent LEL," McBride said. LEL stands for Lower Explosive Limit. "It was a highly explosive situation. It may have been too concentrated to ignite or it could have just been a matter of a small spark igniting the fumes," McBride added. Fire crews were called to the scene at 1:30 p.m. and remained until 2:45. "Columbia called us and we were able to use our positive pressure fan to get the gas level in the house down," McBride said. "It could have been a real bad situation." The captain said the cause of the leak was a malfunctioning shutoff valve at the curb, which Columbia Gas crews were working to repair. "The valve appeared to be shut off at the curb, but since it was malfunctioning, it wasn't completely closed," McBride said. "It was determined the leak in the house was coming from the hot water tank." McBride added that the electricity to the house was shut off. Officers from the Charleroi police department assisted firefighters at the scene.

Group receives Growing Greener grant Jacobs Creek Watershed Association has received a Growing Greener grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection. The grants are provided to improve watersheds by addressing storm water run-off, acid mine drainage through educational programs and other environmental efforts. Patty Miller, JCWA executive director, said the \$60,000 in grant money will be used to help to control excessive storm in Shupes Run, located in Mt. Pleasant and Mt. Pleasant Township. The run-off causes flooding, property damage and storm and sewer system overflows. "The uncontrolled urban storm water discharges ultimately enter Shupes Run, contaminating the stream with urban and roadway pollutants and causing stream bank erosion and sediment deposit on stream beds," she said. Ultimately, Miller said, that harms the streams and the aquatic life by degrading water quality and increasing stream sediment levels. Shupes Run runs through Willows Park in Mt. Pleasant and along the Coal & Coke Trail before it enters Jacobs Creek.

HARRISBURGH PATRIOT NEWS

Gas prices rise earlier than usual, could top \$4/gallon in April In Pennsylvania, the average for a gallon was \$3.65 yesterday. Nationwide, it's \$3.53

SCRANTON TIMES-TRIBUNE

Marcellus gas production in state continues steady climb (Saturday) Natural gas production from Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale wells continued to climb in the second half of 2011, according to data reported Friday by the Department of Environmental Protection. Pennsylvania's deep gas wells pumped out 607 billion cubic feet of gas between July and December, bringing the year's total production to a milestone 1 trillion cubic feet - enough to surpass the amount of natural gas used in the state each year. By the end of the year, 2,210 of the commonwealth's shale wells were tied into pipelines and producing gas - a 35 percent increase in the number of producing wells since the first half of 2011 that helped account for a 40 percent jump in production. The average amount of gas produced daily during the six-month period - 3.3 billion cubic feet per day - was slightly less than industry projections. A July report funded by the Marcellus Shale Coalition, a Pennsylvania industry group, projected an average production of about 3.5 billion cubic feet per day by 2011. The study's estimate was based on drillers' anticipated drilling plans for the year, but many producers cut back on both production and drilling as natural gas prices dropped. Eight of the 10 top-producing wells for the half were Cabot Oil and Gas Corp. wells in Dimock and Springville townships, Susquehanna County, including the top producing well, the King 2 in Dimock Township, which produced 3 billion cubic feet of gas. Cabot's King 2 well also had the best daily average production over the period, producing 16.5 million cubic feet per day. The other top-producing wells for the period were a Range Resources well in Canton Township, Washington County, and the Citrus Energy Corp. Ruark East 1H well in Washington Township, Wyoming County.

As gas drilling boom slows, worry sets in (Sunday) Vince Arena has a commanding view of Route 6 from Moore's Auto Showroom. Since 2006, he has seen the traffic on the two-lane road swell with the region's gas boom until it is bumper-to-bumper, light-to-light for miles just about all day. Every few seconds, a tractor-trailer hauling water or massive pumps to or from drill sites rumbles past. For the last few weeks, however, Mr. Arena has been able to pull out from his lot without relying on the kindness of other motorists to let him out. In January, one of the region's largest gas drillers, Chesapeake Energy Corp., announced it would reduce its rig count in the region. Its rig count will go from 75 to 24, drilling fewer new wells and reducing the flow from existing wells. Other companies made similar announcements. Bradford County has already seen active rigs decline from 27 to 20 as of Feb. 10 as rock-bottom natural-gas prices prodded the company to drive for more lucrative fuels from the earth, such as "wet gas" from western Pennsylvania or oil from other parts of the country, according to Houston, Texas-based Baker Hughes. Chesapeake's announcement suggested the natural gas rush has decelerated. "As soon as the announcement came out, you could see the traffic lighten up," said Mr. Arena, who was wearing a Chesapeake Energy cap. Economic activity is tied closely to rig count, said Anthony J. Ventello, executive director of the Progress Authority, which handles economic development for Bradford and Susquehanna counties. "As goes the rig count, so goes the economy," Mr. Ventello said, noting that a rig has an economic impact not unlike that of an itinerant factory. "As an industry, natural gas is not going away, but we are in a slowdown that will have an effect on the economy." Mr. Arena has talked to his customers in the gas industry. Some have said the rigs may come back in three months, once the weather improves. But he's not as certain, and neither are experts. "The pace won't return to what it was until we see stronger natural gas prices and that's not happening anytime soon," said Steven Schork, of the Schork Report, an energy markets newsletter. "We are in a long-term structural down market that's going to last at least two more years."

WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE

Planners approve 3 natural gas projects (Saturday) After receiving approval from the Lycoming County Planning Commission on Thursday, three projects associated with natural gas activity in the Marcellus Shale can move forward. The commission approved land development plans for the construction of two compressor stations by Anadarko Midstream LLC on slightly less than six acres in McHenry Township. Plans for a single compressor station proposed by PVR Marcellus Gathering LLC in Mifflin Township was approved, as were plans by Aqua Infrastructure LLC in Piatt Township to build a water withdrawal pump station that will draw water from the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and transport it via pipeline north through several townships so it can be used for drilling activities. The Anadarko facility will be northeast of Route 44 off of Browns Run Road, according to Joshua Billings, county subdivision and land development administrator. The plans call for two compressor stations to be built, with the possibility of a third station being built, Billings said. The water withdrawal pump station is proposed on a mobile home park owned by Richard and Joanna Leonard east of the Borough of Jersey Shore. According to Gary Snyder, an engineer with Hatch Mott MacDonald, about 37 mobile homes are currently located in the 12-acre project area. The mobile homes will have to be removed, Snyder said. The company has requested permission from the Susquehanna River Basin Commission for the withdrawal of 3 million gallons of water per day, Snyder said. That request is pending and will be considered at the commission's March meeting, he said. The pump station will transport that water into the mountains north of the township where it will be placed in containment ponds for use in developing gas wells in the area.

ERIE TIMES-NEWS

Water-well regulations could reduce contamination, increase costs A boom in natural gas drilling could prompt state legislators to regulate construction of private water wells. Drilling in the Marcellus Shale and other subterranean shale layers across Pennsylvania is raising concerns about possible contamination of nearby water wells. Legislation introduced by York County Republican Ron Miller in December would authorize the state to regulate water well construction to reduce the chances that well water and groundwater will be contaminated. Pennsylvania and Alaska are the only states that do not already regulate private water well construction. Local drillers oppose Miller's bill, saying that, while its intent is noble, strict regulations could price them out of business and make wells that rural property owners rely on for water cost prohibitive. "We're not only protecting our own interest, we're concerned that the cost will get to the point where few people will be able to afford to drill a water well," said Scott Evans, owner of Evans Well Drilling in Cranesville. The new regulations are necessary to prevent the introduction of methane gas, insects and other substances into private water wells, Miller said, in discussing his bill in January. "The point is that water wells have not been constructed properly to preclude the migration of contaminants into them," Miller said. His legislation would authorize the Pennsylvania Environmental Quality Board to draft standards for water well construction in the state. Those standards could include certification, continuing education and reporting requirements for drillers, and state permits and inspections for well owners, said Gary Rumball, owner of Tri-State Well Drilling at 9846 Jones Road in Greene Township. Those requirements would be costly, Rumball said, and are largely unnecessary. "It's not that we're completely unregulated now. We are licensed, complete with criminal background checks, and report to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources," Rumball said.

Erie Water Works celebrates 20 years, capital successes When Erie Water Works finished a \$5.1 million project that brought public water to McKean Township and borough in 2010, the borough's mayor joked that she would celebrate by taking a nice, long bath. Today, as the utility marks 20 years of operating the city's water system, Weslee Clapper-Krepps is still rejoicing. "It's just a lot of relief for everyone that this has happened," Clapper-Krepps said. "I just wish it happened sooner." The installation of 52,000 feet of water main in McKean borough and township is just one example of how the utility's geographic footprint and infrastructure have greatly expanded in the past two decades. Between 1992 and 2011, the Erie City Water Authority, the utility's governing board, approved 40 major capital projects with prices topping \$1 million, including a \$6 million citywide metering effort, completed in 2002; nearly \$10 million in pumping-related improvements to the Chestnut Street Pump Station, also completed in 2002; and \$4 million to rehabilitate the Chestnut Street plant, completed in 1998.

HAZELTON STANDARD SPEAKER

Law funds housing in drill zones (Saturday) HARRISBURG - Affordable housing advocates are praising the Marcellus Shale impact fee law that dedicates money for housing needs in drilling boom areas with a share set aside for low-income families. The measure was signed Monday by Gov. Tom Corbett. Advocates said the law will meet their goal of making housing available to individuals with low and moderate incomes who are being priced out of the housing market in boom areas due to an influx of newcomers and resulting demand for housing, which boosts prices. "The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania is very pleased that the housing pressures were recognized within the General Assembly and governor's office as critical to the region," said executive director Elizabeth Hersh. Impact-fee revenue to meet housing needs will become available through two routes. Counties with active shale wells that adopt impact fee ordinances can use some of their local 60 percent share of revenue to increase the supply of affordable homes. In addition, \$5 million of impact fee revenue annually will go to a state Housing Trust Fund for use in those counties with active shale wells. At least half that amount is for use in rural counties with active shale wells. The money will be used for new home construction, housing rehabilitation and rental assistance. "At least one third (of the trust fund) must be used to provide homes for those living on about \$25,000 a year or less," said Hersh. The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Authority will oversee the trust fund.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Pa.)

DCNR linked to gas revenue PITTSBURGH — Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale gas drilling companies are recycling more and more of their briny, chemical-laden wastewater, in most cases complying with a request from state officials to keep the pollutants from being discharged into rivers that supply drinking water. But experts are wondering if a loophole in disposal regulations is still allowing significant quantities of one of the worrisome compounds— salty bromides— into rivers and streams, or if shale gas drillers were only part of the problem. The new mystery is this: why hasn't the dramatic progress on the wastewater recycling led to equally clear declines in river bromide levels? An analysis by The Associated Press of 2011 state data released Friday found that of the 10.1 million barrels of shale wastewater generated in the last half of 2011, about 97 percent was either recycled, sent to deep-injection wells, or sent to a treatment plant that doesn't discharge into waterways. Some of the new disposal trends are also raising other questions. The amount of Marcellus drilling waste injected deep underground nearly tripled in the last six months of 2011, with much of that going to Ohio. Officials there are examining whether the high-pressure injections contributed to a series of small earthquakes near one waste site. In the same period of 2010, shale drillers sent about 2.8 million barrels of waste —or 118 million gallons— to numerous treatment plants that discharge into rivers and streams.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

Proposed pension contribution hike is latest foray into federal worker pockets Perhaps federal employees should wear a big red suit with a thick black belt and a funny looking red hat. A flowing white beard, natural or fake, would set the uniform off just right. News this week won't make federal workers jolly, but why not dress them like Santa Claus if current and future staffers are asked — make that required — to give like Saint Nick at Christmas? The latest foray into the pockets of federal employees, in this case those hired beginning next year, comes in the form of increased pension contributions. The increased payments are part of a deal that would extend unemployment insurance, continue the payroll tax holiday and prevent a cut in Medicare payments to doctors. The increased pension contributions would be used specifically for the unemployment insurance. New workers (with fewer than five years of previous service) would contribute 3.1 percent of their salaries to their pension benefits, significantly more than the 0.8 percent paid by most current staffers, in addition to Social Security contributions.

Wind proposal has wide backing When Maryland lawmakers return this week to a debate about offshore wind power, talk likely will focus on the minutiae of how much a subsidy for the fledgling industry will cost ratepayers. Outside the State House, an unlikely alliance of supporters will be asking lawmakers to think bigger. Harnessing

electricity from skyscraper-like turbines, stretch-ed out in rows in the Atlantic, has proved to be an idea with magnetic appeal. It's attracted not just environmentalists but steelworkers' union members, health-care providers and religious groups. "I have been working on clean-energy issues for the last 10 years, and I have never seen an issue that mobilizes and captures the imagination of the public as much," Mike Tidwell, president of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, recently told a gathering of green-energy financiers meeting in the District. "In offshore wind, you've got a solution that strikes the average person as sufficient to the scale of the problem. You've got something visionary, something large, something that looks and feels like the future."

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL

Hearing on wastewater rate increases coming A controversial set of proposed wastewater service rate increases will begin live arguments next month. A Public Service Commission hearing examiner will hold evidentiary hearings on setting rates for seven areas in Sussex and Kent counties starting March 21 at PSC headquarters in Dover. Under the proposal by Tidewater Environmental Services Inc., the communities would see their rates go up by about 90.6 percent. The affected communities are the town of Milton, The Retreat, Harts Landing, Country Grove, Breeder's Crown, Bay Front and Bay Pointe. The increases would raise \$798,000 in additional annual revenue for the company, according to a Tidewater filing. Local residents have complained that the proposed increases are too high. For example, a Bay Front resident would need to pay \$867 more per year under the proposed rate increase. The company reports that the increases are necessary to compensate for high expenses, including rising costs for labor, chemicals, electricity and sludge disposal. A sluggish housing market has made it harder to spread the costs around to new customers, the company has argued.

DELAWARE CAPE GAZETTE

Rehoboth approves outfall route Rehoboth Beach — The Rehoboth Beach commissioners have made it official: the route of the city's ocean outfall pipe will run along Henlopen Avenue before ending 6,000 feet off Deauville Beach. City officials and engineers have long said the proposed route – from the wastewater treatment plant off State Road along the banks of the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal under Grove Park and then down Henlopen Avenue – is the most practical and cost-efficient way of pumping treated effluent to the ocean. In a presentation to the city commissioners Jan. 20, engineers Lee Mayers and Rip Copithorn of GHD said an alternative route going along State Road and then under the Rehoboth Avenue/Fifth Street intersection and down Columbia Avenue was considered, but dismissed. Mayers cited reasons ranging from the numerous underground utilities that would have to be avoided, the narrow right-of-way along Columbia and a potentially negative impact on businesses when construction crossed Rehoboth Avenue. The advantages of the Henlopen Avenue route, Mayers said, are fewer utility lines, a wider street and no commercial areas along the route. The outfall pipe will be built largely using open-trench cutting, but horizontal directional drilling will also be used. Directional drilling can go deeper into the ground than open trench. Mayers said open cut is cheaper than directional drilling, but the latter is more advantageous when trying to avoid traffic problems or environmental issues, including saving trees. He said open cut will be used whenever possible to keep the project cost-efficient.

Acres commissioners send CDP to state Henlopen Acres — The Henlopen Acres commissioners unanimously approved sending the five-year review of the town's comprehensive development plan to the Office of State Planning Coordination for review. Mayor Wanda Davis said the state would make suggestions and send it back. "This is nowhere near final. It will be back," she said. Henlopen Acres' comprehensive plan review will be entering the Preliminary Land Use Service, or PLUS process, a state review. State Planning Coordinator Connie Holland said PLUS is mandatory for all municipalities. She said even for five-year reviews with little to no changes, like Henlopen Acres, the state must still look over the plan. Holland said the PLUS process involves all the major state agencies – Department of Transportation, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control,

Department of Agriculture and the state housing authority, among others – which take part in the review of a comprehensive plan's components. Agency comments are sent back to the municipality for incorporation in the plan.

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE

Thousands in W.Va. still without power after snowstorm CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- One day after snowfall knocked out power to more than 60,000 Appalachian Power customers in West Virginia and Virginia, the company is still working to restore power, spokesman Phil Moye said. Throughout the day Monday, new powe...

CHARLESTON DAILY MAIL

Editorial: West Virginia can go beyond a cracker Joe Eddy, president and chief executive officer of Eagle Manufacturing in Wellsburg, heads a company that was founded in 1894 as a decorative glass factory. The glass industry has just about left the state, but, Eagle adapted. The company now makes a variety of industrial safety, hazardous materials and storage properties that help in the extraction of natural gas. As chairman of the West Virginia Manufacturers Association, Eddy wants people to look beyond merely extracting natural gas from the Marcellus shale field, and at the environment for all manufacturing. There is more at stake than just crackers. "It seems like people are just focusing on the (ethane) cracker," Eddy told the Wheeling Intelligencer. "That is only one piece of the picture. I'm not sure enough people are looking at the whole picture when it comes to what this cracker would mean."

Commentary: Marcellus shale economic engine keeps on rolling THE natural gas-rich shales: nature's gifts that keep on giving. Now comes word that although coal shipments by rail are down as utilities shift to burning natural gas to generate electricity, shipments of sand used to fracture shale formations are up. "Moving sand, pipe and other drilling equipment gives carriers such as CSX, the largest U.S. eastern railroad, new cargo as coal customers scale back," Bloomberg News noted on Thursday. Bloomberg quoted CSX Chief Executive Officer Michael Ward as saying that moving fracking sand into the Marcellus Shale region (which underlies much of West Virginia) is "a great growth opportunity for us." According to Bloomberg, CSX's fracking-sand carloads grew by more than 40 percent to more than 12,000 in 2011. Bloomberg said that although Norfolk Southern does not provide data for sand shipments, the railroad's total carloads for the Marcellus Shale region rose 67 percent to 40,000 last year, compared to 2010

WEST VIRGINIA STATE JOURNAL

API promotes recommended practices for WV gas drillers who are hydraulic fracturing At a workshop this week, American Petroleum Institute reviewed recommended practices for hydraulic fracturing in Charleston. The industry organization has developed a number of standards and guidance documents related to hydraulic fracturing. The API presented some of those standards and practices to a group of industry representatives, emergency personnel and environmental regulators Thursday. API standards are frequently referenced in state law books, including in guidance documents for West Virginia drillers. Rolf Hanson, senior director of state government relations for API, said there are a number of advantages to supplementing a state's regulatory agency knowledge with API standards. "In short, it is technical expertise ... you need the people that are actually on the ground actually doing the work and their input into developing the standards," Hanson said. Jack Harrison of the West Virginia Petroleum Council added that API standards are good for drillers as well. By implementing industry-wide standard sizes, business is not only safer, but less hassle. "These standards comfort companies in the sense that when they ask for an API standard pipe, they know what they are expecting to get," Harrison said. "It takes a lot of the guesswork out of them operating on their own." The documents are constantly changing to adapt to issues that spring up, Hanson said. "These are not static documents, they are currently updated," Hanson said. "You can go to the API website and look

at the 2012 plan. They are addressing issues that have arisen in the past couple of years over Marcellus shale development. The stray gas migration issue is a direct result of some of the issues that have arose in Pennsylvania."

WBOY-TV 12 MORGANTOWN

WVU Develops Marcellus Shale Air Monitoring System West Virginia University's Department of Community Medicine is working with the Department of Energy on a new way to monitor health effects from air quality near Marcellus Shale drilling sites. "We're just beginning, really, to find out what comes from a gas drilling site like this," said Dr. Michael McCawley, a professor in the Department of Community Medicine. "We don't really know what the levels are or if, in fact, the levels are high enough to cause any concern anywhere around." The new monitors measure the levels of dust, other particulates, and gases like methane which have been linked to cancer and respiratory problems. "Later on, looking down the line at health effects, we don't want to be behind the curve in knowing what's happening," McCawley said. The monitors are portable and designed to be set up in a ring around drilling site to see what just what is coming from the site and what isn't. "Truck traffic from an interstate for example could put up the same volatile organic compounds that you might see from a well site. So you want to be able to distinguish what's coming onto the site versus what's leaving it. McCawley's team and the DOE will test the system at a drilling site in Washington, Pa. He hopes to see the system in action in West Virginia this year and plans to publish the blueprints so regulators, gas companies, or even community members could build one. The air quality data will all be public, to eliminate at least one area of contention between drillers and residents. "The community can watch and see what's happening as well when these instruments are used," McCawley said, "because they will transmit data online to a web site from a base station so both the community and the drillers can communicate better about what's actually happening."

WEST VIRGINIA METRO NEWS

Hoppy's Commentary for Tuesday It's reasonable that people living near Marcellus Shale gas drilling sites would be concerned about their water supplies. After all, industrial operations are, by their nature, disruptive. It's important, then, that research be conducted to help determine the impact—or lack thereof—the drilling has on, among other things, our water supplies. The latest research comes from the University of Texas Energy Institute. The study was released at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Vancouver, British Columbia. The study found that fracking—the process where a solution of water and chemicals is forced down the borehole at high pressure to release the gas—does not impact groundwater. "There is at present little or no evidence of groundwater contamination from hydraulic fracturing of shales at normal depths. No evidence of chemicals from hydraulic fracturing fluid has been found in aquifers as a result of fracturing operations," the report said. (The report did include a footnote reference to a possible contamination in the Pavilion, Wyoming area where the fracturing was done at "depths shallower than normal gas wells, which are typically more than 2,000 or 3,000 feet deep.") That's not to say, however, that Marcellus Shale drilling presents no risk to water supplies. For example, the report says, it is possible undiluted chemicals stored on the surface would spill and get into the groundwater. Additionally, "casing failures or poor cement jobs" could cause a leak into groundwater. Fortunately, the state of West Virginia has regulations in place addressing both above ground chemical storage as well as spill containment and specifications for well casing integrity that should dramatically reduce the pollution risk. Also, the report looked into complaints that hydraulic fracturing is contaminating water wells. Most of those complaints focus on claims of methane seeping into wells and the taste, color and smell of the well water being affected.

WHEELING INTELLIGENCER

Conference On Shale Set (Sunday) WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W.Va. - West Virginia's renowned Greenbrier Resort will host the Marcellus and Utica Shale Conference and Expo in April, a development Corky DeMarco believes showcases the state's significance in the industry. "All these type of conferences have been in places like Pittsburgh to this point," said DeMarco, executive director of the West Virginia Oil and Natural Gas Association. "Having it at the Greenbrier shows how important our state is in this game." Jack Williams, president of Exxon Mobil subsidiary XTO Energy, will be the keynote speaker for the April 1-3 event set for the historic White

Sulphur Springs, W.Va. resort. XTO recently acquired thousands of acres for drilling in eastern Ohio, specifically in Belmont and Monroe counties. "The mere fact that Exxon Mobil acquired XTO Energy and that the president of XTO feels it important enough to speak at this conference is a testament to how important it is," said Greenbrier Executive Director of Sales and Marketing Stuart Williams. "The Marcellus and Utica Shale have the potential for the largest economic impact on the area that can be found since Josiah White's discovery of coal in Pennsylvania helped fuel the steel boom that built the U.S." Joining Williams as scheduled speakers for the conference are: West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin; U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va.; John Felmy, chief economist for the Washington, D.C.-based American Petroleum Institute; Scott Rotruck, vice president of corporate development and state government relations for Chesapeake Energy; and David Flannery, a partner in the Jackson Kelly law firm.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (W. Va.)

W.Va. public workers rally over pay, conditions CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) - Several dozen West Virginia public employees are spending their day off rallying for better pay and conditions. The workers marked the Presidents Day holiday at the state Capitol by calling on lawmakers to improve thei...

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE SUN

EPA gives mixed grades on Chesapeake Bay cleanup plans Federal regulators have given mostly high marks to the latest Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan drafted by Maryland but found fault with Pennsylvania's and Virginia's restoration blueprints. In reports posted online late Friday, the Environmental Protection Agency said Maryland's draft "watershed implementation plan" for meeting the agency's bay pollution reduction goals "meets EPA's expectations." Maryland and the other five states that drain into the Chesapeake have been working with the agency for the past three years on a "pollution diet" aimed at reducing nutrient and sediment pollution fouling the bay by 20 percent to 25 percent. The states are required to have all control measures needed to restore the bay in place by 2025. The EPA mostly praised draft plans submitted in December by Maryland, Delaware, the District of Columbia and West Virginia, but warned of "enhanced oversight" of pollution permitting and stepped-up federal enforcement in Pennsylvania and Virginia if they do not address shortcomings in their strategies for bay cleanup. The agency noted that Maryland's pollution-control efforts depend in part on closing the funding gap for upgrading the state's 67 largest sewage treatment plants over the next five years. Gov. Martin O'Malley is pushing for legislation in Annapolis that would effectively double the "flush fee" paid by every household and business to cover the projected \$385 million shortfall....Jeff Corbin, senior bay adviser to EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, said in an email that federal officials are prepared to take such actions but would rather not. The plans the states submitted two months ago were drafts, he noted, and the states have until the end of March to firm them up. Virginia's cleanup plan "seems pretty strong," Corbin said in an email, but the state did not submit all the data needed to assess it fully. "We will be working with [Pennsylvania officials] between now and March 30 to strengthen their plan," Corbin added. "There have been some good discussions with them recently."

Commentary: The biggest problem for the bay: animal waste Millions of tons of one of the Chesapeake Bay's largest sources of pollution continue to be dumped onto farm lands without proper regulation. Farm animals produce 44 million tons of manure annually in the bay watershed, and most of it is collected and disposed of on farmland — or left where it falls. This ranks the bay region in the top 10 percent in the nation for manure-related nitrogen runoff, and the problem of proper management of this waste is exacerbated by the fact that three highly concentrated animal feeding operation areas contribute more than 90 percent of the manure. The Delmarva Peninsula, one of these three areas, has some of the greatest concentrations of chicken farms in the country. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Bay Program, in 2009 agricultural manure contributed more than 20 percent of all nitrogen and 26 percent of the phosphorus flowing to the bay system. This exceeds the combined levels of nutrients

flowing from all wastewater treatment plants handling the waste from 13 million people and all industrial dischargers. Human waste disposal is strictly regulated, and we have made great strides in meeting requirements at wastewater plants at great public costs exceeding several billion dollars. Unfortunately, the agricultural lobby continues to block efforts to sensibly regulate animal manure.

Blog: Bay 'smart' buoys scuttled by Obama (Saturday) The *Chesapeake Bay's* long-suffering "smart" buoys, which have come back after being shot up and hit by boats and ships, now face perhaps their most serious ...

Blog: Group: EPA went easy on Maryland bay cleanup plan Talk about grading the graders. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation took issue Monday with the Environmental Protection Agency's rating of the bay pollution cleanup plan drawn up by Maryland officials. The Annapolis-based environmental group agreed with the EPA that Maryland had put together a "strong plan," but said the jury's still out on whether the state will follow through with its commitment to raise the funds needed to carry out the pollution reductions in its plan. Alison Prost, CBF's Maryland executive director, called "good first steps" a trio of bills pushed by Gov. Martin O'Malley: 1) to raise the "flush fee" to pay for upgrading sewage treatments plans; 2) to limit new development on septic systems; and 3) to steer growth towards rural villages. She urged lawmakers to pass those, but added: "The EPA evaluation falls short in one area. Maryland must do more to prevent new sources of pollution as the state continues to grow." Prost called on the legislature to tackle the pollution from future growth by passing bills to require less-polluting septic tanks whenever they are used, and to force the state's counties and municipalities to levy fees on their residents that would pay for reducing polluted storm runoff from streets and parking lots.

SALISBURY DAILY TIMES

Commentary: Speak up now for clean water Several weeks ago, Maryland submitted its Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan to the EPA. The plan details how the state and local jurisdictions will reduce pollution. This is our best chance in decades to make a real, lasting difference to our local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. Developed over a two-year period with local input, this plan will ensure that we have clean, healthy water in our rivers and streams, safe places to fish and swim, protection for local drinking water and local jobs that depend on fishing and recreation. According to a recent poll, nearly two-thirds of Maryland voters support spending more money to reduce pollution in local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay through an increase in the Bay Restoration Fund. More than three-quarters of voters support the idea of "smart growth," and 62 percent of rural voters support restricting new septic systems. The Maryland General Assembly is now considering a suite of bills to fund the kinds of efforts that will help reduce pollution in the bay and our local waterways -- including upgrading waste water treatment plants, septic systems and putting more money into bay restoration activities.

Commentary: Is offshore wind a good bet for Maryland? Yes, offshore wind energy appears to be a good investment for Maryland and for America. It would cost each of us with an electric bill a maximum of \$2 per month more. It is peanuts for most people compared to the possible return in energy and jobs. Skeptics say job projections are just projections. We cannot know if any jobs will be created. There is the usual concern about people with fixed incomes not being able to afford a rate increase. Skeptics point to past failures as predictors of future failure. They suggest offshore wind farming involves "manufacturing expertise" not found in Maryland at present. Would these skeptics have suggested Columbus stay in Spain, that there was nothing to be done about polio or that we could not land a man on the moon? There will be jobs. The question is how many. The old and the poor are with us always despite whatever better future is envisioned by the young. Failure often comes before success. If we do not have the people with the "manufacturing expertise" in Maryland it is time we invite them here. Opportunity awaits.

Possible Maryland fees hike could set boaters adrift OCEAN CITY -- Boat registration fees in Maryland will more than triple if a bill proposed by the Department of Natural Resources is passed by legislators. House Bill 1307, proposed by DNR in an effort to raise money for projects like dredging and maintaining buoys, would drastically increase boat registration fees in the state. The fee increase, if it happens, would likely make boaters howl. But DNR Director of Boating Services Robert Gaudette said the rate hike would raise "critically needed" funding.

"We're in a pretty serious situation," he said. Under the proposed bill, the \$24 each Maryland boat owner has paid for a two-year vessel registration since 1983 would increase based on the size of the boat. The new rates would be phased in, starting in 2013. By 2016 the owner of a boat between 16 and 32 feet long will pay \$125 for a two-year registration. Boaters with vessels greater than 65 feet would pay \$700 to be legal for two years.

FREDERICK NEWS POST

Flush-tax increase a concern for Myersville mayor MYERSVILLE — Gov. Martin O'Malley's proposal to increase the flush tax is not fair to small towns like Myersville, Mayor Wayne S. Creadick Jr. said. O'Malley has proposed raising the flush tax, a fee paid by septic tank users that goes to upgrading the state's wastewater treatment plants. Speaking at a recent town meeting, Creadick said residents should be aware of the fee increase coming from Annapolis. "How they are going to raise the flush tax doesn't make sense to me," Creadick said. "Once you read it, you'll be as angry as I am." The O'Malley administration is trying to sell the flush tax as something that will go toward cleaning the Chesapeake Bay, but once the money is raised, it could be used for anything other than the Bay, Creadick said. "I really feel passionate about this issue," said Creadick, a Republican. He said his beliefs have nothing to do with partisan politics. Each Myersville resident currently pays a flush tax of \$7.50 a quarter or \$30 annually. This money is supposed to address the top 66 sewage plant deficiencies. The governor's proposal more than doubles the existing fee to \$68, Town Manager Kristin Aleshire said. Creadick worries the funds will go to other parts of the state. To qualify for flush tax money, a jurisdiction must use 500,000 gallons of water and sewage a day or more. Myersville's smaller water and sewer plants don't meet that criteria, so in essence, citizens are being taxed for a revenue stream they have no access to, Aleshire said

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Md.)

MARYLAND: Watermen to pull more ghost pots from bay ANNAPOLIS — Maryland's ghost pot retrieval program starts again next month. State officials say watermen have until Friday to apply for work under the program. Ghost pots are lost or abandoned crab traps that can kill crabs and fish that get caught in them. They are being collected under a federally funded program launched in 2010 to help watermen hurt by the decline of the blue crab fishery. Areas targeted this year include the North East River, Fairlee Creek, West River, Rhode River, South River, Severn River, Magothy River, Patapsco River, Patuxent River, Upper Tangier sound, Lower Hooper Island and the Big and Little Annemessex Rivers at Smith Island. Natural Resources officials say \$1 million is available this year, and they are focusing on helping watermen affected by last year's wet weather.

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

Editorial: The Chesapeake: Bay seasoning The Chesapeake is producing good news. The Bay's populations of oysters and crabs are on the rise. This is not a time to relax. The states in the Bay's watershed must redouble their efforts instead. The Bay's improvements do not result from coincidence or accident. Government policy contributed to the trends. And we should stress that the growth of oyster and crab stocks is a trend; the development is not necessarily permanent. Intervention remains an imperative. Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia and others need to stress water runoff, water treatment and similar issues. The improvements regarding oysters and crabs testify to the virtues of persistent action.

NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS

Army Corps to host Hampton oyster restoration meeting Got something to say about oyster restoration in Virginia? Maybe you just want the latest news on the mollusk? If so, mark April 17 in your calendar. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will host a public meeting from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Thomas Nelson Community College in Hampton.

Officials are scheduled to discuss their plans to restore oysters, which have drastically declined in the since the 1950s due to disease, overfishing and loss of habitat. The corps will also take public comment. The meeting is one of three — the two others will be held in Maryland — concerning the corps' oyster restoration efforts in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Much of its work has involved building sanctuary reefs that rise above the bay floor.

Gloucester Board of Supervisors to discuss cleaning up sewer discharges GLOUCESTER — The Gloucester County Board of Supervisors meets Tuesday night and will discuss a presentation by Public Utilities Director Marty Schlesinger on the county's response so far to state and federal agencies' orders to clean up sewer overflows into local waterways. Gloucester is one of 14 cities, counties or sanitation districts involved in the cleanup ordered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Quality. The orders to limit discharges of sewage into local waterways dates to 2007. The goal of the orders is to force localities and the Hampton Roads Sanitation District to reduce the number and volume of discharges, improve the maintenance of the various systems and ensure that the systems are designed and sized to work together, according to a report from Schlesinger to the supervisors. The costs to the localities and HRSD will run in the millions of dollars. Initial repair costs on a stretch of sewer line underneath Route 14 in the Court House area of Gloucester is estimated by Schlesinger at \$50,000, according to Schlesinger's report.

ROANOKE TIMES

Giles County plant fined for 1-day emission excess A lime mining and processing plant in Giles County has been cited by state regulators for violating air pollution standards. Chemical Lime Company of Virginia agreed to pay a fine of \$27,720 as part of an agreement recently reached with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. The plant exceeded the allowable level of particulate matter emissions from a kiln used to process limestone, according to a consent order from the agency. An inspection by DEQ found that on a single day in December, a smokestack from the kiln was releasing 0.438 pounds of particulate matter per ton of stone feed - nearly four times the 0.12 emission limit mandated by the state. "We had that one exceedance, we took remedial action, and we believe the plant is now operating in compliance," said Ken Curtiss, vice president of Lhoist North America, a Texas-based company that operates Chemical Lime Company. Curtiss said the company has a record of environmental compliance and does not believe the emissions harmed either the environment or public health.

STAUNTON NEWS LEADER

Farmers question EPA on bay data Local officials and farmers are questioning the computer model guiding the Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort almost from the outset, saying it is based on deeply flawed data. When the region's counties and cities last month filed a plan, requested by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, outlining how the could help Virginia meet federal pollution reduction targets, every plan except Staunton's questioned the data the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency used to calibrate its computer model. "The math is complicated. The data that has been used to calculate the model has been questioned by many groups," Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent Jason Carter said. "There's things going on that aren't going into the (model) that we may not be getting credit for." Some sources of pollution such as wastewater treatment plants and industry have reporting requirements that make it easier to calculate their contributions. But determining the amounts of pollution coming from other sources, such as farms, is problematic. "(The model) simulates every rainfall every hour from 1985 to 2005 using 20 years worth of data on flows and nutrient loadings," said James Davis-Martin, the state conservation department official tracking Bay pollution issues in this part of Virginia. The current data is compiled from more than 300 monitoring stations used throughout the 64,000-square-mile Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

MISCELLANEOUS

BLOOMBERG BUSINESS NEWS

Federal Workers Face 'Unprecedented Assault' in U.S. Budget War Washington • Congress is considering ways to cut U.S. federal workers' pay, benefits and possibly their jobs even as a record number are borrowing against pensions. Concern over the situation almost derailed a deal to extend the payroll tax cut last week as several lawmakers objected to a provision that would have required federal workers to contribute more to their pensions. Negotiators ultimately agreed to target newly hired federal workers. There's more ahead, as moves to hold down government salaries mirror tightening at the state and local levels. Congress is considering extending a two-year federal pay freeze for another year, through 2013. Bills designed to reduce the federal workforce continue to be introduced. And another measure is pending that includes across-the-board requirements for more contributions to pensions. "We are witnessing an unprecedented assault on public employees and federal employees in particular," said Rep. Gerald Connolly, D - Virginia, whose suburban district has one of the nation's largest concentrations of government workers. "I am mortally offended on their behalf that they continue to be singled out for every sacrifice." Lawmakers in Maryland, home to more than 300,000 federal workers, have also joined the fight. Sen. Ben Cardin, D - Maryland, and Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D - Maryland, whose district includes the Washington suburb of Bethesda, helped kill the initial pension provision in the payroll tax deal. "We still strongly oppose the provision that raises \$15 billion to help offset the cost of this package from future workers," the two lawmakers said in a statement last week. President Obama called both Van Hollen and Cardin last Wednesday to press them to agree to a deal. Cardin said Obama assured him that federal employees' salaries and benefits wouldn't become a routine target. "The president was pretty strong on his commitment to helping us make sure that doesn't happen," Cardin told reporters.

BNA DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

EPA Says Dioxins Do Not Pose Significant Risk at Current Exposure Levels EPA establishes its first-ever "safe dose" for dioxins as part of an updated health assessment that determines current exposure levels to dioxins do not pose a significant health risk. The "safe dose," properly called a reference dose, or RfD, is to help health officials determine when exposure levels might lead to thyroid, fertility, dental, immunological, and other health problems other than cancer. EPA sets the RfD at 0.7 picogram of dioxins per kilogram bodyweight per day. That compares to individuals' estimated intake of dioxins in food and water of about 0.6 picogram per day, EPA says

D.C. Circuit Declines to Set Deadline for EPA to Revise Particulates Rule A federal appeals court declines to set a schedule for EPA to revise air quality standards for particulate matter, denying petitions from advocacy groups and 10 states. The agency says it plans to propose revised standards by June and finalize them by June 2013. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit says it anticipates EPA "will work diligently to meet the agency's goal." The action comes in a lawsuit filed by the American Lung Association, the Environmental Defense Fund, and the National Parks Conservation Association.

EPA Revises Conformity Rule to Adapt to Changing Air Quality Standards EPA issues a final rule limiting the need to revise its transportation conformity requirements each time the agency sets new air quality standards. The agency restructures two sections of the transportation conformity rule to make clear that the program's existing requirements apply to new or revised national ambient air quality standards. EPA says that will reduce the need to revise the transportation conformity requirements each time it sets new air quality standards.

Court Told EPA Did Not Evaluate Cumulative Effect of Power Plant Rules EPA has not evaluated how various environmental regulations targeting power plant emissions cumulatively will affect compliance options, an intervenor and three friends of the court say in a brief seeking to vacate the agency's Cross-State Air Pollution Rule. In addition to the cross-state rule, which requires power plants to reduce pollution that crosses state lines, EPA has finalized mercury and air toxics standards for utilities. Its regulatory agenda also targets greenhouse gas emissions, water intake structures, and regional haze, according to the brief from Industrial Energy Consumers of America, Southeastern Legal Foundation Inc., and Putnam County, Ga.

Integrated Planning for Water Quality Draws Skepticism at EPA Workshop Mayors, city managers and water

quality officials express skepticism about EPA's integrated planning approach to municipal wastewater and stormwater management, asserting that the agency's current draft framework is too vague and aspirational to serve as a practical planning tool. Participants in a workshop on EPA's Draft Integrated Planning Approach Framework say they appreciate the agency's efforts to improve the long-range water quality planning process but some say the document raises too many practical questions to be fully functional.

Corps Reissues 48 Nationwide Permits, Adds Renewable Energy Permits The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reissues 48 nationwide permits and issues two new permits to authorize land- and water-based renewable energy projects. One of the permits being reissued, NWP 21 for surface coal mining, prohibits "valley fills," which have typically been used to dispose of surface mining waste in mountain stream valleys. It also imposes new limits on stream impacts, according to the corps. Most of the reissued permits have no major changes from 2007, the last time the nationwide permits were authorized, the corps says

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Congress targets federal workers for savings WASHINGTON - (AP) -- Federal workers were \$15 billion losers as Congress looked for ways to pay for parts of the just-passed legislation to extend the payroll tax cut and federal unemployment benefits through the end of the year. Their advocates are crying foul, saying two consecutive years of seeing their pay frozen means the nation's 2 million civil servants already have contributed more than \$60 billion to reducing government costs. Republicans, led by their aggressive freshman class, say federal employees, with their generally secure jobs and benefits, can do more. They have proposed several bills to make that happen. The White House also is asking federal employees to pitch in more for their retirement plans. Under the bill passed Friday, about half of the \$30 billion cost of extending unemployment benefits will be made up by requiring newly hired federal workers to pay an additional 2.3 percent of their salaries for their pensions. Currently they pay 0.8 percent. Combined with other bills House Republicans have proposed to further limit federal wages and benefits, the total cost to civil servants could be \$134 billion over the next decade, said House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer of Maryland. "The ongoing efforts to target federal workers will substantially undermine our ability to recruit and retain the quality of people we need," said Hoyer, whose district encompassing some of the Washington suburbs is home to thousands of government employees. Unions representing federal workers were equally upset. "It is unreasonable to turn to this dedicated workforce yet again while shielding those who are not paying their share," said Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union. "I don't know how cutting our retirement puts anybody back to work," said John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees. "What are we, an ATM machine?"

Congress approves payroll tax cut WASHINGTON - Americans are getting an election-year tax present. Congress voted with rare speed and cooperation Friday to extend a Social Security payroll tax cut for 160 million workers and to renew unemployment benefits for millions more who haven't seen a paycheck in six months. With lawmakers' ratings in the gutter, the legislation sped through both the House and Senate and was on its way to President Obama, who saluted the quick passage.

Water Is Key Issue in NY Frack Fight One of the most contentious issues in the debate over shale gas drilling in New York's share of the Marcellus Shale region - how to handle millions of gallons of contaminated wastewater - remains unsettled. As the state ponders final regulations, environmental advocates say the issue is a glaring gap in preparations. "What's disconcerting is that while the state raises a number of possibilities, there isn't any real clear sense as to what the path forward is going to be," said Mark Brownstein, deputy director of the Environmental Defense Fund's national energy program. "On an issue as important as this, all of us who commented from the environmental community are looking for greater clarity." There are three options for waste disposal in the state Department of Environmental Conservation's 1,500-page environmental review and proposed regulations for hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, of deep horizontal wells for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale: The water that flows from active gas wells is contaminated with traces of chemicals used in drilling and fracking, which breaks up the shale to release natural gas.

Former House speaker Gingrich charges Obama pursues 'outrageously anti-American' energy policy
WASHINGTON — Newt Gingrich is asserting that President Barack Obama pursues an “outrageously anti-American” energy policy that snubs the Keystone oil pipeline and puts too much stock in electric car technology to wean the country from foreign oil dependency. The former House speaker tells CBS’s “This Morning” show gasoline prices have skyrocketed since Obama took office. He says Obama entertains a “fantasy” that the electric car “is going to liberate us from Saudi Arabia.”

LA TIMES

Fracking debate divides New York landowners (Sunday) As the state prepares to lift a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing, also called fracking, many people debate the risks of leasing mineral rights to extraction companies. Reporting from Callicoon, N.Y.— Pete and Jack Diehl grew up in the tall clapboard house their German immigrant ancestors built in 1842, on a hillside overlooking a creek in the Catskills. Sharp-featured and lean, the brothers run dairy farms within a couple miles of each other. They own land together, and Pete's grandson works on Jack's farm every day after school. But the Diehls are divided over the fate of their property — like thousands of others along the Pennsylvania border, where rich natural gas deposits underlie forests, pastures and towns. As New York prepares to lift a moratorium on new permits for hydraulic fracturing — which carries environmental risks — landowners are debating whether to lease mineral rights to extraction companies. Pete, 67, opposes leasing his land and the property the brothers jointly own. He worries that he would lose control over his pastures to a big corporation and that the drilling process could ruin the water. "Once you lease the land, they can do what they want on it. They can drill wherever they want," he said. "It's about the future. It's the landscape. It's the Catskills."

Emergency plan approval clears way for Arctic drilling SEATTLE -- One of the last significant hurdles to offshore oil drilling in the Arctic was cleared Friday with approval of a plan to deal with a nightmare scenario -- an oil spill at the top of the world. The Obama administration accepted Shell Gulf of Mexico Inc.'s plan for responding to an accident should it occur in the Chukchi Sea. The company hopes to begin exploratory drilling there, 70 miles off the northwest coast of Alaska, in June. The issue of how to clean up a spill in the remote waters, 1,000 miles from the nearest U.S. Coast Guard base, has been the biggest impediment to opening the most significant new frontier in U.S. energy development. But Interior Department officials said Shell's plan could protect the fragile environment even in the event of a large blowout. "After an exhaustive review, we have confidence that Shell's plan includes the necessary equipment and personnel pre-staging, training, logistics and communications to act quickly and mount an effective response should a spill occur," said James A. Watson, director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement.

FOX NEWS

Fracking's effects on groundwater may be overblown, study shows (Monday) A University of Texas study has found no evidence that fracking -- hydraulic fracturing of shale to extract natural gas -- is contaminating groundwater. Problems associated with the process have been reported in water, but they appear to occur at ground level or just below the surface, according to the study released Friday. Many are common to any natural-gas extraction process, or are the result of mishandling of wastewater, the researchers said. "The bottom line was, in the areas we investigated ... we found no direct evidence that hydraulic fracturing itself was contaminating groundwater," said Charles Groat, professor of geology at the University of Texas at Austin. Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, involves injecting water, sand and chemicals at high pressure into shale, which shatters the rock, releasing natural gas. Wells are dug straight down into the ground and then branched off horizontally into the shale, making the gas far more accessible. Natural gas is the cleanest-burning hydrocarbon fuel, and North America has vast reserves that could replace petroleum products from overseas. The development of techniques that allow horizontal drilling has made it economical to extract the gas from shale seams. It is not clear how the study will play in areas in which the fracturing process is considered a public-health problem because of contaminated water. There even have been documented cases in Ohio and Pennsylvania homes of dissolved methane in the water either catching fire or exploding. Fracking is specifically exempt from the Clean Water Act.

New push for *federal workers* to contribute more to pensions **IN FOCUS: Washington lawmakers pushing to require federal workers to pay more for retirement.**

RICH KARLGAARD: The Republican bill was hardly asking for anything. They are asking for federal workers to increase their contribution from 1.2 percent of their paycheck, to 1.5. Not a big increase. I am surprised it was battled so much. Let's put it into context. We have an annual deficit running over a trillion dollars and the government now spends a quarter of GDP. Everybody has got to do something here. That was not much to ask for.

RICK UNGAR: It is interesting because if you look at the top line of the report on this that came out recently, you can make a pretty good case for asking them to do this. As usual, however, the devil is in the details and you have to look just a little bit deeper. When we are talking about federal employees with only a high school degree, it is a very sweet deal for them. They are getting 70 percent more in benefits and a better salary. But, when you look at professionals and employees with doctorates, not so good. They are making on average, 23 percent less than their private sector counterparts and they are about even on the benefits. I think we have to be a little bit careful and not dissuade those who we need in government service to come, while not giving too sweet of a deal to the people who should not have it.

STEVE FORBES: In terms of pay what government workers put in now, each dollar they put in, the government puts in \$14 for benefits. There is a lot of room that they can kick in a little more.

KYM MCNICHOLAS: I have no doubt in my mind that it is really, really good that we all pay more into our retirement, I just do not think that federal workers should be forced to do so. I do not think anyone should be forced to do anything like that. They cannot afford it. Why are we targeting these working class men and women? Haven't they gone thought enough? Congress already froze their wages for two years to the tune of \$60 billion in lost wages. It is a wonder that these union leaders are in an uproar. Yes, I said union leaders, and I normally don't agree with them, but to force these federal workers to pay three times more for their pension is just wrong. They cannot afford it right now.